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CIVILIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE SEEKS FLORIDA VOLUNTEERS
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TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Volunteers are being recruited to serve as civilian advisers to rebels fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua but not to fight, an organizer of a paramilitary group said.

Civilian Military Assistance, which claims to have 3,000 members nationwide, provides advice, supplies and services to the anti-Sandinista guerrillas based on the Honduras-Nicaraguan border, said Fred Hening, who heads the group's Florida chapter.

Hening said the group does not engage in combat or supply weapons.

"We're not looking for mercenaries," Hening, 42, a former Marine sergeant, said Monday. "We're looking for moral support, donations _ especially donations _ and military equipment."

The group also is looking for volunteers to serve in "civilian field positions" and advise guerrillas about fighting techniques and weapons, he said.

"We're just a bunch of people who are tired of sitting on our butts and watching what's going on down there," he said.

Between 75 and 100 people from north Florida have expressed interest in joining the group, Hening said. He said most will be rejected.

"A lot of people we get calls from are the survivalist types who sit in an armchair and read Soldier of Fortune (magazine)," Hening said. "We're looking for people who can help these people help themselves."

"We're trying to stop this leftist movement. We don't want to see this happen in our own back yard."

Tom Posey of Decatur, Ala., the leader of Civilian Military Assistance, told the Tallahassee Democrat that his group plans a major organizing drive in Florida. The group hopes to quadruple its Florida membership, estimated at

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100, in the next month. Posey, 38, is a fruit and vegetable wholesaler and a Vietnam veteran.

Local members will arrange meetings where more people can learn about the group, Posey said.

Civilian Military Assistance garnered headlines after two of its members, Dana Parker and James Powell, were killed in a Sept. 1 helicopter crash. The aircraft was flying over Nicaragua. Hening said they were on a medical mission.

CIA officials told a Senate Intelligence Committee that members of the group were acting independently of the intelligence agency.

Hening won't give details of exactly where his group is operating on the Honduras-Nicaragua border. He said the information could endanger members of the Civilian Military Assistance and rebels.

Hening also said he's never been in Nicaragua, but could not say the same for other members of the group. "They're not supposed to," he said. "It wouldn't be safe."

Civilian Military Assistance is trying to get medical supplies, tents, equipment and clothing to the anti-Sandinista rebels, he said. The advisers teach the guerrillas about sanitation, how to organize military operations and how to take care of their weapons. The supplies and advisers are flown in civilian aircraft to El Salvador and the Honduras. From there, the advisers go to the rebels' camps.

"They capture a lot of weapons down there, but they don't know how to take them apart and clean them," Hening said.

Hening said the group deals mainly with members of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force.

He hedged about the exact amount of supplies, but Posey has estimated the value of the private assistance at \$100,000. Officials of the CIA, Pentagon and State Department have testified before a congressional committee that the private assistance is legal.